

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 372

By McDonald

A RESOLUTION to direct the Department of Economic and Community Development to prepare a report detailing the actions and recommendations necessary to protect the forests of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, the permanent loss of forest lands due to land use change has been widely recognized as the single greatest threat to Southeastern forest ecosystems and the services and benefits they supply; and

WHEREAS, the increasing impact of land use change on the loss of forest land was documented in the federally sponsored Southern Forest Resources Assessment and the related, more detailed Small Area Study of the Southern Plateau conducted by the Landscape Laboratory of the University of the South, both released in 2002; and

WHEREAS, the loss of forests due to changes to non-forest conditions was recognized by the Tennessee Forestry Commission in its report on the Southern Forest Resource Assessment released in February 2004 pursuant to House Joint Resolution 189; and

WHEREAS, the Forestry Commission conducted several geographically disbursed public hearings and found that: "The public is overwhelmingly concerned about the impacts of urbanization on Tennessee's forest resources. Over fifty-five percent of the public comments on urbanization were related to development and urban sprawl."; and

WHEREAS, the Forestry Commission found, inter alia, "There will be a significant loss of hardwood timberland to urbanization;" and "Urbanization will occur in Tennessee, especially around the state's major metropolitan areas of Nashville, Knoxville, Memphis, Chattanooga, and the Tri-Cities;" and "Urbanization brings new management and economic challenges to the forestry community."; and

WHEREAS, the Forestry Commission recommended that: "Effective management of urban and community forest requires cooperation among forest resource managers, citizens,

and local government officials, primarily planning and zoning departments. It is recommended the division develop an internal plan that directs its foresters to become a viable part of the community planning process. Foresters can assist planning departments to understand the importance of maintaining tree canopy cover in their cities and the benefits trees provide. The division's foresters need to assist communities in the development of tree ordinances in order to provide continued use of silvicultural practices in close proximity to communities and to allow the community to maintain tree canopy cover during the development process. In addition, foresters may provide information about urban forests and how trees can serve as a vegetative solution to environmental problems, such as air quality and stormwater runoff.”; and

WHEREAS, the long term consequences of the sale of large areas of forest land, previously held by industrial owners such as pulp and paper companies, to timber investment management organizations (TIMOS) whose investment driven decisions on future management and use of the forest lands or the conversion or subdivision of forest lands are still emerging; and

WHEREAS, State and other public and non-profit acquisition of timber rights or conservation easements or other arrangements for the protection of forest ecosystems and ecosystem services (including long term hardwood timber supply) can only assure the long term sustainability of a small percentage of the fourteen million acres of forestlands in Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that a report be prepared recommending specific actions, initiatives, policies and programs to be taken to integrate the protection of forest lands into the planning activities and decisions of state and local governments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this report be prepared under the leadership of the Department of Economic and Community Development and its Local Government Planning Advisory Committee and Local Planning Assistance Program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that assistance in preparation of this report and recommendations be provided by the Division of Forestry and the Forestry Commission, the

Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) and its Conservation Commission, Natural Heritage Division and TDEC's divisions responsible for air and water quality; the University of Tennessee, including especially those elements of the university system with special knowledge of land use planning, forestry and forest health, and watershed protection and water supply quality and quantity and air quality, and the quality of human environment; the Department of Transportation and its long range planning and environmental planning elements; the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; and appropriate federal agencies and non-governmental organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Economic and Community Development shall provide opportunities for public participation in preparation of this report and recommendations including, but not limited to, specific efforts to incorporate input from organizations actively involved in land use management and forest resource management issues in Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Economic and Community Development shall submit its findings and recommendations no later than February 1, 2008, to the Governor, as well as Chairs of the following committees of the General Assembly: Senate Commerce, Labor, and Agriculture Committee; Senate Environment, Conservation, and Tourism Committee; House Conservation and Environment Committee; and the House Agriculture Committee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development.